

EFL WRITING INSTRUCTION: INVESTIGATING BELIEF- PRACTICE GAPS IN KARAWANG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Writing instruction is considered one of the most challenging aspects in EFL learning, as it requires a complex process. Because of this complexity, teachers' beliefs are central to determining how writing is taught, guiding choices of strategies, classroom activities, and feedback. Yet, research consistently shows that these beliefs are not always fully enacted in practice, resulting in mismatches shaped by contextual realities. This study investigated mismatches between EFL teachers' beliefs about writing instruction and their actual practices. Conducted as a qualitative descriptive case study, the research involved two English teachers at a junior high school in Karawang. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations and analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that teachers believed effective writing instruction should involve pre-writing activities, the use of models, process-based writing, skill integration, collaboration, prioritizing content and vocabulary, and motivational feedback. However, classroom observations showed these beliefs were not consistently implemented. Several mismatches were identified, particularly in pre-writing activities, models, revision stages, collaborative writing, and feedback practices. These were influenced by contextual constraints such as limited instructional time, classroom management demands, and exam-oriented teaching practices. These findings highlight the gap between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices and the need for instructional support.

Keywords: Teachers' beliefs, Writing instruction, Classroom practice, Mismatch, EFL

A. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' beliefs are widely recognized as powerful determinants of classroom decision-making and pedagogical practices. In the context of writing instruction, beliefs serve as the underlying framework that guides teachers in selecting methods, designing activities, and providing feedback to learners. Beliefs about writing are generally associated with the view that writing is not an instant product but a recursive and developmental process, requiring stages such as prewriting, drafting, conferring, revising, editing and publishing (Johnson & Westkott, 2021). When teachers believe in process-oriented writing, they are more likely to integrate activities such as brainstorming, collaborative drafting, and revision tasks into their

lessons. Such beliefs reflect their conviction that students learn best through active engagement in the writing process rather than through rote exercises.

However, beliefs alone do not guarantee consistent classroom practice. Previous studies reveal that teachers often face difficulties in translating their pedagogical orientations into daily instruction. Borg (2018) and Buehl & Beck (2015) argue that mismatches frequently occur because teachers' practices are mediated by external factors, including time limitations, curriculum demands, and classroom management challenges. For example, Hsieh & Chuang (2021) reported that although teachers in Taiwan strongly valued writing as a communicative skill, they often relied on controlled tasks due to examination pressure. Similarly, Cheng et al., (2025) found that teachers endorsed revision in principle but rarely implemented it, constrained by large class sizes and heavy workloads.

While these challenges have been documented in various contexts, little is known about how such mismatches manifest in Indonesia. Writing remains one of the most difficult skills to teach in Indonesian junior high schools, where students often struggle with vocabulary, grammar, and text organization. Yet, few studies have examined how Indonesian EFL teachers' beliefs about writing instruction align with their actual practices. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate: (1) teachers' beliefs about the most effective way to teach writing, and (2) the mismatches between these beliefs and their actual practices. By addressing these aims, the study contributes to a better understanding of the complex relationship between teacher cognition and instructional realities.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study design to explore teachers' beliefs about writing instruction and the mismatches between those beliefs and their classroom practices. As Creswell (2014) explains, qualitative research is concerned with understanding social or human problems through detailed descriptions of participants' perspectives in their natural settings. A case study was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of a bounded system (Yin, 2018). The research was conducted in a junior high school in Karawang, chosen due to its accessibility and active implementation of English instruction. The site was chosen due to its accessibility and its active implementation of English instruction. Two English teachers participated in the study. They were purposively selected based on their teaching experience, their involvement in writing instruction, and their availability for both interviews and classroom observations. Their dual role as lesson planners and classroom instructors made them suitable participants for examining the potential mismatches between pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices.

Two instruments were employed to collect data: semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers before classroom observations. This method was chosen because it provided flexibility for participants to elaborate on their ideas while ensuring coverage of predetermined themes such as pre-writing strategies, use of models, process writing, collaboration, and error correction. Interviews were conducted in Indonesian to ensure clarity of expression, recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Classroom observations were then carried out to document actual teaching practices. Each teacher was observed during two sessions of 45 minutes following the school's regular English lesson schedule. Field notes were taken to capture instructional strategies, teacher-student interaction, and classroom management, providing data for comparison with interview responses.

The data were analysed using Braun & Clarke (2022) six-step thematic analysis. The process began with familiarization with the data through repeated readings of interview transcripts and observation notes, followed by generating initial codes to identify meaningful units of information. These codes were then organized into themes, which were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence with the dataset. Finally, the themes were defined and reported through a narrative that integrated interview excerpts and observation results. Triangulation between interviews and observations enhanced the credibility of the findings, while researcher reflexivity was maintained to reduce bias.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on thematic analysis of interview transcripts and classroom observations, two major themes emerged: (1) teachers' beliefs about the most effective way to teach writing instruction and (2) mismatches between these beliefs and actual classroom practices.

1. Teachers' Beliefs about the Most Effective Way to Teach Writing Instruction

The interview findings reveal that both teachers hold several key beliefs about effective writing instruction in the EFL classroom. Their perspectives emphasize the importance of structured guidance, skill integration, and supportive classroom practices in facilitating students' writing development. These beliefs can be categorized into five main themes: (1) Using Pre-Writing Activities as Idea-Processing Strategies, (2) Using Models and Examples as Instructional Hooks, (3) Teaching Writing as a Systematic Process, (4) Integrating writing with other language skills, (5) Encouraging Collaborative Writing as Supportive Practice, and (6) Prioritizing Content and Vocabulary over Grammar, (7) Handling Errors through Motivational Feedback. The following subsections elaborate on each of these beliefs based on the teachers' explanations and supporting interview data.

Using Pre-Writing Activities as Idea-Processing Strategies

Both teachers emphasized the importance of pre-writing activities as the foundation of writing instruction. They believed that brainstorming, outlining, and mind mapping were essential for transforming vague thoughts into structured plans. To illustrate how pre-writing activities facilitate students' idea generation, Teacher 1 described the use of brainstorming as an initial step in the writing process:

“Another strategy is brainstorming, where students generate ideas before they begin writing. Sometimes, they can express ideas in Indonesian first before transferring them into English.” (T1)

Teacher 2 also emphasized planning but from a more structural perspective:

“I ask students to create an outline so that their ideas are more organized. Then, they are given time to brainstorm or mind map to expand their ideas.” (T2)

Teacher 1's use of L1 for brainstorming shows a clear recognition of students' cognitive struggles in generating ideas in a second language. Translanguaging, allowing students to begin with Indonesian, is an effective strategy to bridge the gap between their existing knowledge and the target language. This practice reflects the idea that guided support helps learners develop their writing ability gradually. As claimed by Alwasilah (2024) that incorporating structured can enhance students' confidence and proficiency in writing.

Similarly, teacher 2's emphasis on outlining demonstrates a strong focus on organization and cognitive structure. By encouraging students to prepare an outline and expand their ideas through brainstorming or mind mapping, the teacher provides a clear framework that helps students manage the complexity of writing tasks. This practice aligns with Keen (2021), who notes that pre-writing is a crucial stage in the process approach, where students experiment with ideas before addressing issues of grammar and organization. Moreover, Hsieh & Chuang (2021) found that brainstorming helps students feel more prepared and less anxious about starting their drafts, confirming its positive effect on student confidence. Thus, pre-writing significantly improve EFL students' writing skill (Ebadijalal & Moradkhani, 2023).

Using of Models and Examples as Hooks

Both teachers expressed the belief that students need concrete models of writing to guide their work, serving as "hooks" to capture students' attention and provide examples of effective writing. This belief was reflected in Teacher 2's explanation that providing writing models helps students understand how English texts are structured:

"In my opinion, the most effective way is to provide examples first... many students are still unfamiliar with how to write properly in English." (T2)

Teacher 1 reinforced the use of models with more focus on analysis:

"...analyzing examples of good writing, organizing ideas systematically, and guiding students through the steps of writing until they produce a complete text." (T1)

Teacher 2's approach is grounded in the idea that exposure to models reduces uncertainty about writing expectations. Providing authentic examples allows students to grasp genre-specific conventions such as structure, style, and organization. Teacher 1's belief goes deeper, advocating not just the presentation of models but their deconstruction, engaging students in a more analytical exploration of writing features. This belief resonates with Cheng & Zhang (2022), who found that the use of models significantly improves students' genre awareness and writing ability. Additionally, Walls & Johnston (2023) emphasize that active engagement with models, rather than passive observation, promotes metacognitive awareness of text structure and linguistic features. Thus, modeling is crucial for effective writing instruction (Gadd & Parr, 2025; Villarreal & Lazaro, 2022).

Teaching Writing as a Systematic Process

Both teachers emphasized the importance of writing as a process, comprising stages such as drafting, revising, and editing, rather than expecting students to produce a finished product immediately. This perspective was reflected in Teacher 1's explanation of how writing should be implemented through a series of structured stages:

"Writing should be taught as a process. Drafting, revising, and editing are essential stages to prevent students from feeling overwhelmed." (T1)

Teacher 2 reinforced this idea:

"The process includes drafting, revising, and editing. Only after going through these stages can students produce a complete and meaningful text." (T2)

The statements indicate that the teachers emphasized that writing is a developmental process, and their belief reflects an understanding that writing is not a one-off product but an ongoing journey of reflection and improvement. Teacher 1's point about preventing students from feeling overwhelmed indicates that process writing serves as a scaffolding strategy, reducing the cognitive and emotional load on students as they refine their work. These beliefs align with the widely adopted process writing approach by Wang (2025) that emphasizes drafting, revising, and editing as essential stages in writing development. In addition, Qiu et al., (2021) also found that process writing increases students' confidence as they become more comfortable experimenting with ideas.

Integrating Writing with Other Language Skills

Both teachers expressed a belief that writing should not be taught in isolation. They viewed listening, reading, and speaking activities as integral to enriching students' writing, providing both input and opportunities for rehearsal. This perspective was reflected in Teacher 1's explanation of how integrating other language skills can support students during the writing process:

"Listening to songs or stories can inspire ideas, reading provides models, and speaking allows students to express ideas orally before writing them down." (T1)

Teacher 2 shared a similar strategy:

"I ask students to read short passages first, then they can discuss them in groups before starting to write. This way, their ideas are richer." (T2)

The statements indicate that the teachers recognized that writing benefits from being interwoven with other language skills. Listening and reading serve as input sources, enriching students' vocabulary and understanding of genre conventions. Speaking, on the other hand, allows students to express and rehearse their ideas before committing them to paper, reducing cognitive overload, and helping them organize their thoughts. This approach demonstrates a holistic view of language learning, where writing is not isolated but connected to other skills that contribute to overall language proficiency. This belief is supported by Bentahar and Cranker (2021), who advocates for skill integration in language teaching. Ng et al., (2024) also confirmed that integrating speaking and reading activities before writing results in more coherent and well-developed texts. Teachers' beliefs reflect an understanding that writing benefits from interaction with listening, reading, and speaking, as these skills provide the necessary linguistic input and rehearsal opportunities.

Encouraging Collaborative Writing as Supportive Practice

Both teachers emphasized the value of collaboration in the writing process, believing that pair or group work helps students exchange ideas and build confidence. This perspective was reflected in Teacher 1's explanation of how collaborative activities support students during the writing process:

"Pair or group writing is very helpful. Students can freely share ideas, collaborate, and feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts." (T1)

Teacher 2 also agreed:

“Pair or group writing is very beneficial. Students can revise each other’s work and inspire one another.” (T2)

The statements show that teachers saw collaborative writing to ease cognitive load and foster confidence. By sharing ideas and receiving feedback from peers, students not only gain new perspectives but also become more comfortable with their writing. This approach is rooted in the belief that writing is a social process, where interaction and feedback are crucial for developing both textual quality and learner motivation. Li (2023) found that collaborative writing instruction significantly improves both writing quality and learner motivation.

Prioritizing Content and Vocabulary before Grammar

Both teachers emphasized that writing instruction should prioritize content and vocabulary before focusing on grammar. They viewed grammar as important but felt that it should be refined after the content is firmly established. This perspective was reflected in Teacher 1’s explanation of the priorities in teaching writing:

“The focus of writing instruction includes content, genre structure, and vocabulary. Grammar is usually emphasized last.” (T1)

Teacher 2 agreed:

“The focus is on content and vocabulary; grammar usually comes last since it is the most difficult.” (T2)

This belief reflects a communicative approach to writing, where meaning and message take precedence over form. Both teachers recognized that students need to first develop their ideas and use appropriate vocabulary to express those ideas before worrying about grammatical accuracy. This approach minimizes anxiety and allows students to engage with writing in a more fluid and confident way. This aligns with findings by Hsieh & Chuang (2021), who demonstrated that delaying grammar correction fosters greater student confidence. Hsiang et al., (2020) also support this belief, noting that focusing on ideas and vocabulary first encourages students to express themselves without the fear of making grammatical mistakes. This method aligns with the process writing approach, where content and fluency are prioritized, and grammar is introduced later as students develop their writing skills.

Handling Errors with Motivation

Both teachers emphasized a preference for motivational rather than punitive error correction strategies. They believed that providing encouragement and feedback helps students learn from their mistakes. This perspective was reflected in Teacher 1’s explanation of how feedback is delivered during the writing process:

“I usually give motivation and praise when students attempt to write, even if there are mistakes. Afterwards, I conduct reflection together with the students.” (T1)

Teacher 2 also shared:

“I usually give praise and then reflect with students to find out why they had difficulties.” (T2)

This belief reflects a growth mindset approach, where errors are seen as opportunities for learning rather than failures. Both teachers understood that praise and reflection help students maintain motivation and develop resilience in their writing. Encouraging students to engage with their mistakes in a positive way fosters a supportive classroom environment where learning is seen as a process of trial, error, and improvement. This approach aligns with Buehl & Beck (2015), who emphasize the importance of motivational strategies in sustaining student engagement. Sakrak-Ekin & Balgikanli (2019) also found that supportive feedback enhances student confidence and persistence, encouraging them to take risks in their writing. The teachers' beliefs here support the broader framework of growth mindset in education, where mistakes are framed as part of the learning process.

2. Mismatches between Beliefs and Actual Classroom Practices

Although the teachers expressed clear beliefs about effective writing instruction, classroom observations revealed that these beliefs were not always consistently reflected in their actual practices. Several discrepancies emerged between the teachers' stated pedagogical views and what occurred during classroom instruction. These mismatches were influenced by contextual factors such as limited instructional time, curriculum demands, and classroom management challenges. The following subsections present the main areas where these inconsistencies appeared, including pre-writing activities, the use of models and examples, process writing, collaborative writing, and error-handling practices.

Pre-Writing Mismatch

Although both teachers expressed strong beliefs about the importance of pre-writing activities, classroom observations indicated that these strategies were not consistently implemented during the lessons. Pre-writing activities such as brainstorming, outlining, or mind mapping were expected to help students generate and organize ideas before writing; however, their application in practice appeared limited. Observation data showed that Teacher 1 occasionally conducted brief brainstorming activities, often allowing students to translate their ideas from Indonesian into English. In contrast, Teacher 2 tended to omit the pre-writing stage and asked students to start writing immediately.

“Teacher 2 directly asked students to begin writing without providing brainstorming or outlining activities.” (Field notes, T2)

This finding indicates a discrepancy between the teachers' stated beliefs and their classroom practices. Although both teachers acknowledged the importance of pre-writing activities in supporting students' idea development, these strategies were not always implemented consistently during instruction. One possible explanation is that practical constraints, such as limited instructional time or classroom management considerations, may lead teachers to prioritize the completion of writing tasks rather than allocating time for planning activities. As argued by Phipps and Borg (2009) that the systemic pressures of time constraints and workload often result in practices that contradict teachers' ideal beliefs. This finding echoes Qiu et al., (2021), who observed that even when teachers valued pre-writing, it was often abandoned due to limited lesson time. The exam-driven nature of the curriculum also

contributes to a product-oriented approach, further undercutting the implementation of process-based strategies.

Model and Example Mismatch

Teacher 1 consistently used models, but Teacher 2 replaced them with formulaic prompts.

“Teacher 2 provided students with 5W+1H questions instead of model texts.” (Field notes, T2)

This mismatch can be interpreted as workload and curriculum pressure influencing teacher practices. Teacher 2 may have turned to prompts because they are quicker to implement and easier to manage within tight lesson schedules. This suggests that even though Teacher 2 valued models, the practical constraints of the classroom led to the use of more formulaic approaches, which are easier to assess and less time-consuming. Cheng & Zhang (2022) found that teachers often rely on formulaic prompts in high-pressure environments, despite knowing the value of authentic models.

Process Writing Mismatch

While both teachers believed in the importance of drafting, revising, and editing, the revision stage was often skipped in practice. Classroom observations revealed differences in how the two teachers implemented the use of models in writing instruction. While Teacher 1 consistently provided model texts as references for students, Teacher 2 tended to replace them with formulaic prompts rather than presenting complete examples of writing.

“Teacher 1 asked students to write a draft but did not allocate time for revision.” (Field notes, T1)

The omission of revision highlights the institutional bias toward product-oriented writing. When classroom time is limited and students are focused on producing finished texts, teachers may forgo revision to meet curriculum goals or assessment deadlines. Similar mismatches in process writing have been noted by Wei & Zhang (2025), who found that revision is often the most neglected stage in writing instruction. The study also highlights how institutional pressures, such as exam-based assessments, can contribute to the erosion of process-based pedagogical practices.

Collaborative Writing Mismatch

Classroom observations revealed differences in how collaborative writing was implemented by the two teachers. While Teacher 1 occasionally incorporated group writing activities, Teacher 2 tended to rely on individual writing tasks rather than encouraging peer collaboration.

“Teacher 2 asked each student to write individually without any peer collaboration.” (Field notes, T2)

This finding indicates a discrepancy between the teachers' expressed beliefs about the value of collaboration and the instructional practices observed in the classroom. Although both teachers acknowledged that collaborative writing can support idea exchange and increase students' confidence, Teacher 2's preference for individual writing suggests a greater emphasis on efficiency and ease of monitoring students' work. Managing collaborative

activities may be perceived as more challenging, particularly when teachers need to supervise multiple groups and ensure equal participation among students.

This tendency may also be influenced by contextual factors such as large class sizes and the demands of exam-oriented instruction. In such contexts, individual tasks are often considered easier to organize and assess within limited instructional time. Phipps and Borg (2009) argue that institutional constraints, including classroom management challenges and assessment demands, can shape teachers' instructional decisions and sometimes lead to practices that differ from their stated pedagogical beliefs. This finding aligns with Prastikawati et.al., (2025) that classroom realities, including resource constraints, class size, and time limitations, posed significant challenges to implementing ideal assessments.

Error-Handling Mismatch

Classroom observations revealed that although both teachers expressed a preference for motivational feedback, their actual feedback practices often relied on direct correction.

“Teacher 1 corrected students’ grammar errors directly on the board without discussing possible revisions with students.” (Field notes, T1)

This finding indicates a discrepancy between the teachers' stated belief in providing supportive and motivational feedback and the feedback strategies implemented during classroom instruction. Instead of engaging students in reflective discussion about their errors, the teacher tended to correct mistakes directly, focusing primarily on identifying and fixing grammatical inaccuracies. This tendency is consistent with research on feedback practices in EFL contexts. Sakrak-Ekin and Balgikanli (2019) suggest that under instructional pressure, teachers often rely on feedback strategies that allow for faster processing and grading. Ferris (2011) explains that while direct correction can help students notice and fix specific linguistic errors, it may reduce opportunities for learners to reflect on their writing and actively engage in the revision process. Therefore, combining correction with explanation or guided revision is often recommended to support deeper learning and long-term writing development.

The findings discussed above reveal several areas where teachers' stated beliefs were either reflected in or differed from their classroom practices. To provide a clearer overview of these patterns, Table 1 summarizes the relationship between teachers' beliefs and the instructional practices observed in the classroom.

Table 1. The Summary of Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Practices

Aspect	Teachers' Beliefs	Classroom Practices
Pre-writing activities	Brainstorming, outlining, and mind mapping considered crucial to organize ideas.	T1: Minimal brainstorming and translation. T2: Pre-writing skipped entirely.
Use of models	Models and examples are essential for scaffolding students' writing.	T1: Consistently used model texts. T2: Relied on 5W+1H prompts, no authentic texts.
Writing as a process	Writing should include drafting, revising, and editing to build confidence.	T1: Drafting implemented, revision omitted. T2: Focused only on final product.
Integration of skills	Writing should relate to reading, listening, and speaking.	Both integrated reading and discussion before writing tasks.
Collaboration	Pair/group writing fosters idea sharing, confidence, and peer revision.	T1: Applied group writing activities. T2: Assigned individual writing tasks.
Content & vocabulary	Prioritized content and vocabulary first; grammar refined at later stages.	Both emphasized content and vocabulary before grammar, consistent with beliefs.
Error handling	Supportive and motivational feedback preferred over punitive correction.	Both relied mainly on direct correction, with limited motivational feedback.

D. CONCLUSION

This study investigated teachers' beliefs about effective writing instruction and examined how these beliefs were reflected in their actual classroom practices. The findings revealed that the teachers held several pedagogical beliefs that emphasized the importance of pre-writing activities, the use of models and examples, writing as a systematic process, the integration of writing with other language skills, collaborative writing practices, prioritizing content and vocabulary before grammar, and providing motivational feedback when addressing errors. However, classroom observations indicated that these beliefs were not always consistently implemented in practice. Several mismatches were identified, particularly in the implementation of pre-writing activities, the use of models, the revision stage of process writing, collaborative writing activities, and error-handling strategies. These discrepancies suggest that contextual constraints such as limited instructional time, classroom management challenges, and exam-oriented instructional demands may influence teachers' instructional decisions.

The findings highlight the complex relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and classroom realities. While teachers may hold theoretically informed beliefs about effective writing instruction, the extent to which these beliefs are enacted in practice is often shaped by institutional and contextual factors. This study therefore underscores the importance of providing teachers with adequate institutional support and professional development opportunities to help them align their instructional practices with their pedagogical beliefs.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research involved a limited number of teachers within a specific educational context, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research could involve a larger sample of teachers and explore additional contextual factors that influence the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices in writing instruction.

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